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WLW
CINCINNATI

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

115
P.M. - E.S.T.

A SERIES OF DRAMATIZATIONS OF BETTER LAND USE.

No. 174

"BIG SANDY"

August, 23, 1941

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER

VOICE

We took it for granted that land was everlasting;

We said ownership of the land insured security.

SECOND VOICE

Tools would wear out, men would die --

VOICE

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: ABRUPT DISCORD

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: DEEP RIVER, fading behind...

ANNOUNCER

A little stream forms in the southwest corner of Virginia, and fed by innumerable springs and brooks, it trickles placidly through valleys and coves to become just another river. The water is sluggish here, merry there, just another river wending its way to the sea. Just another river -- but every river has a character, a beauty of its own -- for around every river is built the lives of a thousand homes, a million heart-throbs, a destiny. Such a river is the Big Sandy, with such a character, such a beauty -- and the valley of the Big Sandy is the scene of the 174th consecutive episode of "Fortunes Washed Away."

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ORGAN: UP AND CLIMB INTO SEVERAL STRIDENT CHORDS AND OUT.

NARRATOR

Yes, a little stream forms in the southwest corner of Virginia, a little stream bubbles along the narrow valleys of Kentucky, a tiny spring and another spring and another spring form a brook that twists and tumbles through the West Virginia hills. They meet. They form the Big Sandy. Big Sandy -- river mothering fertile valleys and timbered hills, hills rich in timber, rich in coal. Big Sandy -- a trickling stream here, a foaming, churning stream there, and then a mighty river moving toward the Ohio River and on to the sea. Big Sandy -- mother of a great people. You should know its people.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

NARRATOR (cold)

You should know its people. Will you come with me?

ORGAN: SEVERAL STRIDENT CHORDS AND OUT

NARRATOR

Now, up here along Jennie's Creek, is the home of a typical hill farmer. His name might be Lark Dawson, or Jason Stratton...but I think you'll like him...let's see if...(FADE)

LARK

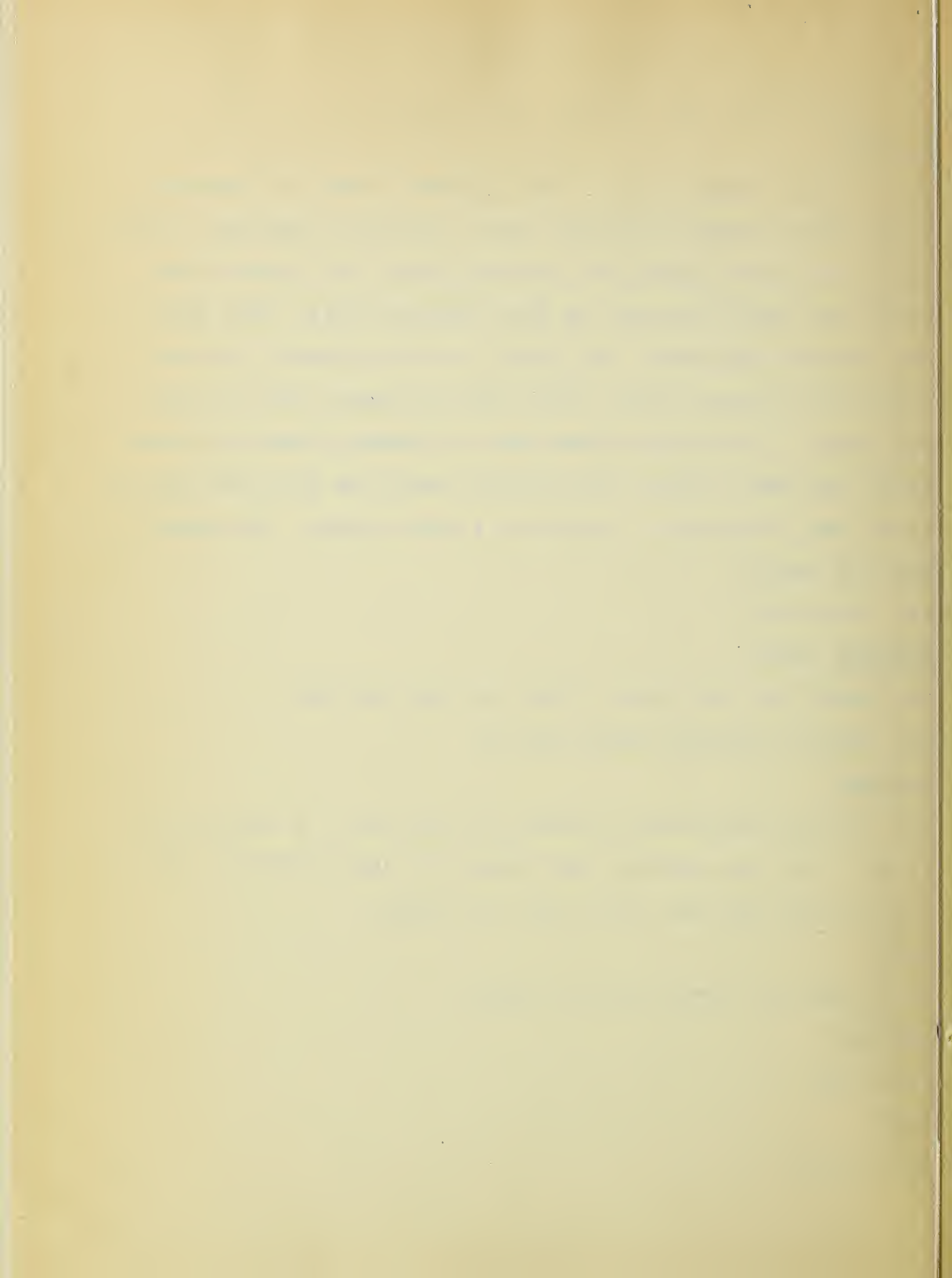
Well, drag up a cheer and sot a spell.

NARRATOR

Thank you.

LARK

Have a chew?



NARRATOR

No thanks. I'll smoke my pipe.

LARK

Be as you like. The wife here smokes a pipe.

SUSY

Nothin's better.

LARK

I allus say a pipe ties a body down.

SUSY

Sure, I know that story by heart. A pipe ties a body down. Hit's all right for the wimmen folks to smoke a pipe, p'tkler old grannies who's no fit for nithing else than to tend the baby. That's a-causin' you're plumb lazy.

LARK

Now, Susy...

SUSY

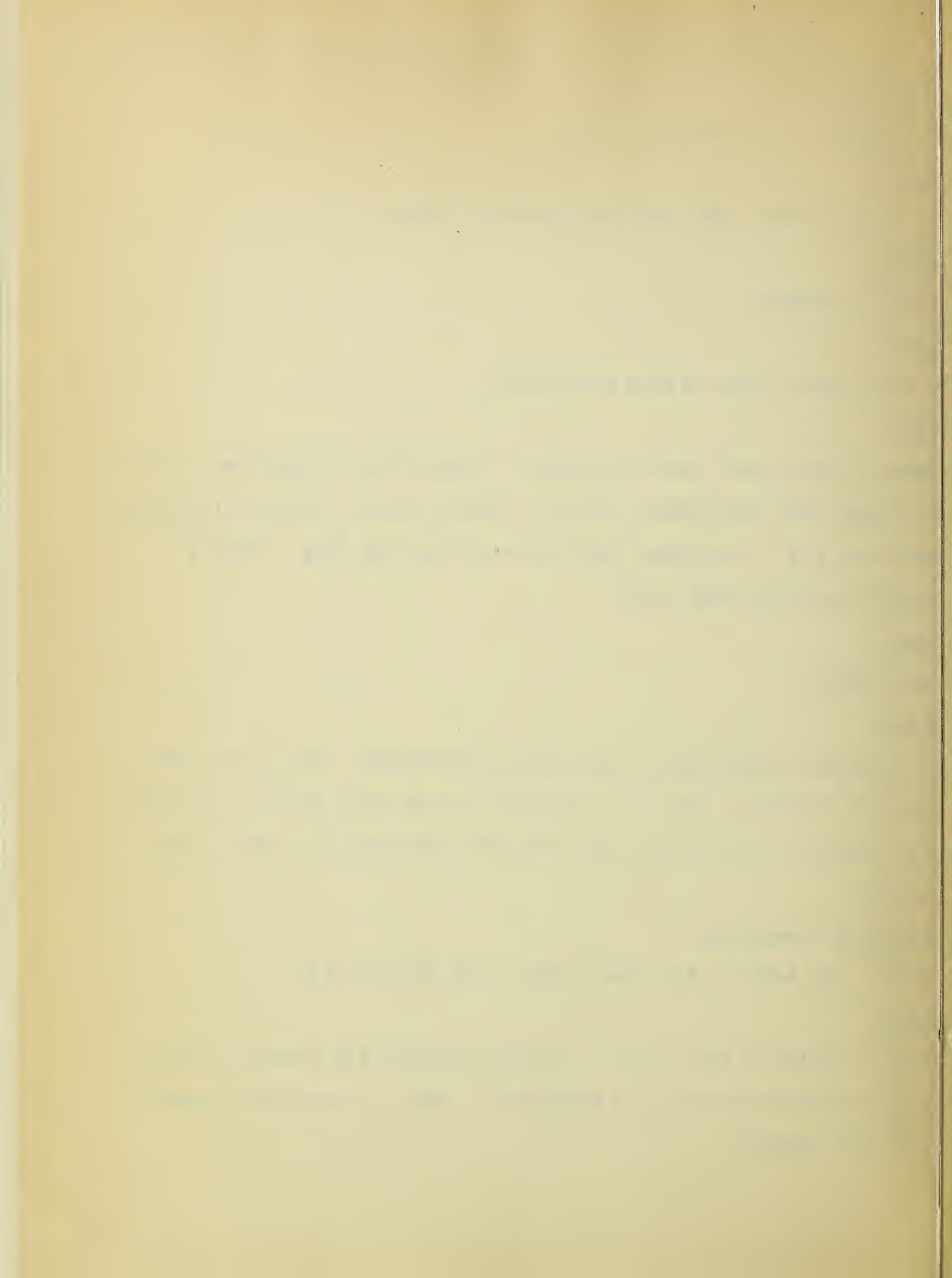
For you men folks it's a heap more comfortabler for you to take a chaw of t'backer, so's you can step around where you're a mind to, not wearyin' about a hot coal from the foirplace to keep a pipe a-goin'.

NARRATOR (coughing)

Ahem. You have a nice place here. Did you buy it?

LARK

Nope, I heir-ed this scope of land, and this log house, from pa, same as him from his'n. (JOCULARLY) Susy, I reckon he thinkn we must be tenants.



NARRATOR

No, I...

SUSY

You won't find many tenant farmers in these mountains, stranger, and plenty few share-croppers. We like our own lives, and to be left alone, and to own our own farms, no matter how small they mought be.

LARK

And we work together, we do. My boy Jonathan works with me in plantin' and harvestin' the crops. And Susy there, and our dotter Elvirie pick up a hoe and go into the corn patch when the housework is done.

SUSY

I reckon you're wondering about this log house, stranger.

LARK

He never mentioned that, Susy.

NARRATOR

Well, I....

LARK

Sure you don't want no t'backer?

NARRATOR

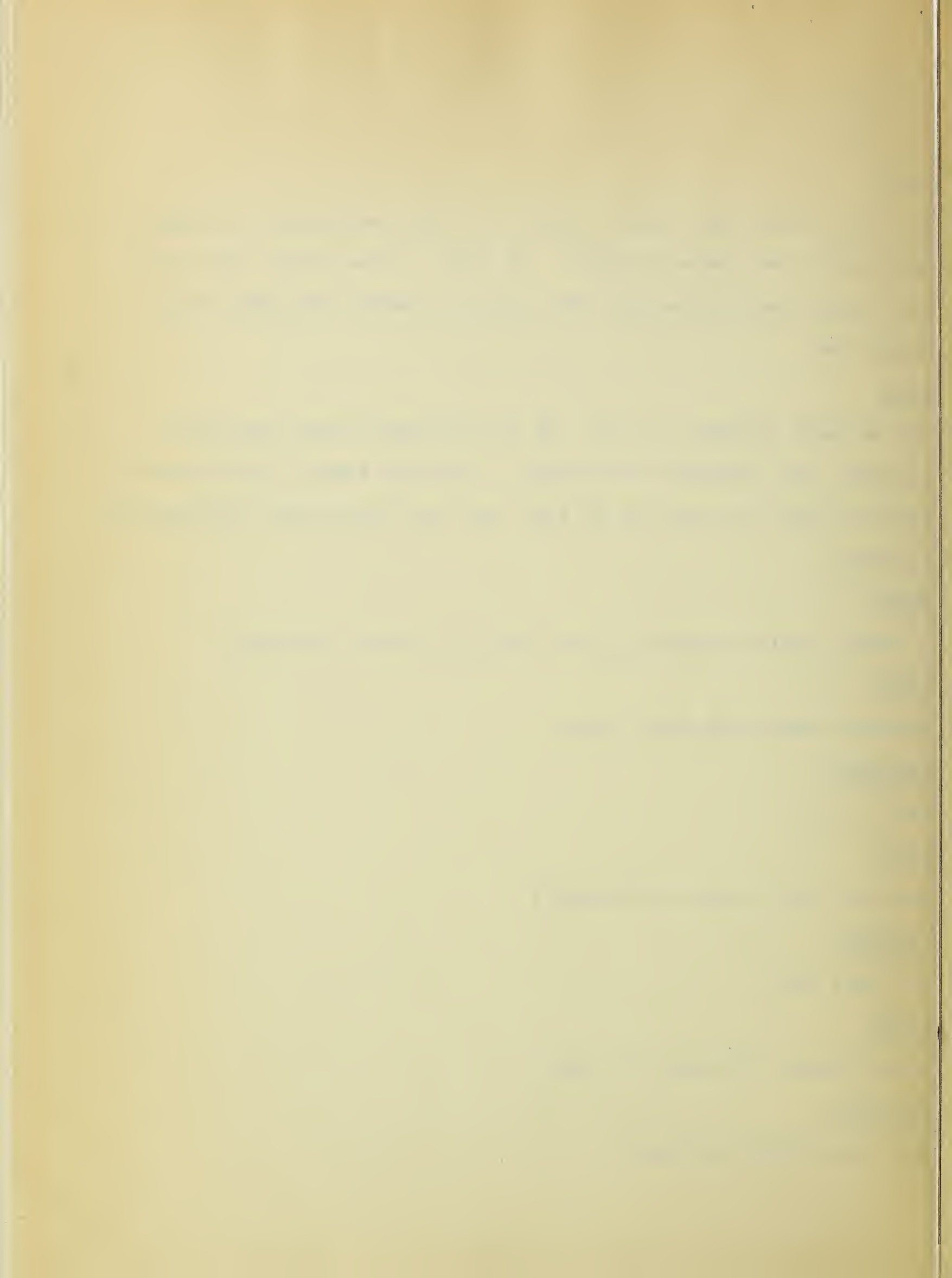
Not just now.

LARK

Plenty here. We raise our own.

NARRATOR

But about this log house...



LARK

Well, what was good enough for me and pa is good enough for us.
We've good wood aplenty to keep the foir goin' and there's room
around the foirplace for the whole family.

SUSY

A-course, we're gonna prettify it. I've been at him for a spell to
nail some weatherboards over the logs, and put in some "cat-and-clay"
on the chimney.

LARK

I'm a-aimin' to do so right smart.

SUSY

Well, you'd better A-fore the chimney falls apart.

NARRATOR

Cat-and-clay?

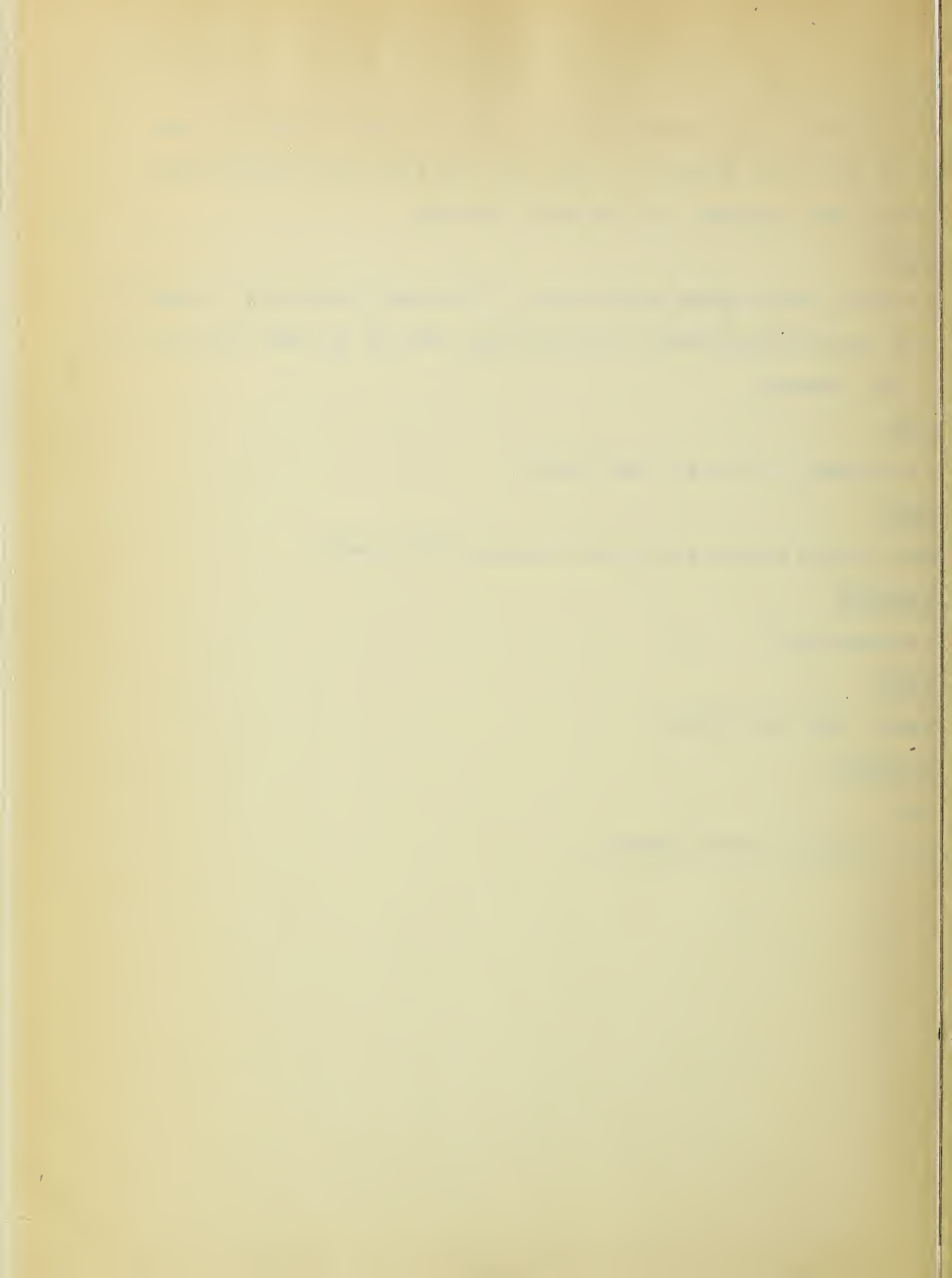
LARK

Sure. Mud and sticks.

NARRATOR

Oh.

ORGAN: SYMBOLIC MUSIC BEHIND...



NARRATOR

Land of the Big Sandy country...a great oval basin of jagged hills
and clear streams and muddy streams...mud...mud...mud...soil washed
from lands that need the soil. The bottoms and the coves produce
grain and tobacco and meadows. The hillsides produce grass and
grain and ginseng. The mountainsides grow "Trees of Heaven", and
poplar and cherry and linden and sycamore. Oh, but I want to take
you back to this hill farm. You see, national defense also means
soil defense, saving the land from erosion, and keeping plenty of
food for us all....Susy will tell you that....(FADE)

SUSY (fading in)

...and here in the cellar house you can look at the shelves and
see for yourself.

NARRATOR

Amazing!

LARK

Susy allus does enough cannin' to last from one summer to the next.
See...presarves, apple butter, jelly, cucumber pickles, beets,
string beans...

SUSY

AND we allus raise our own bread.

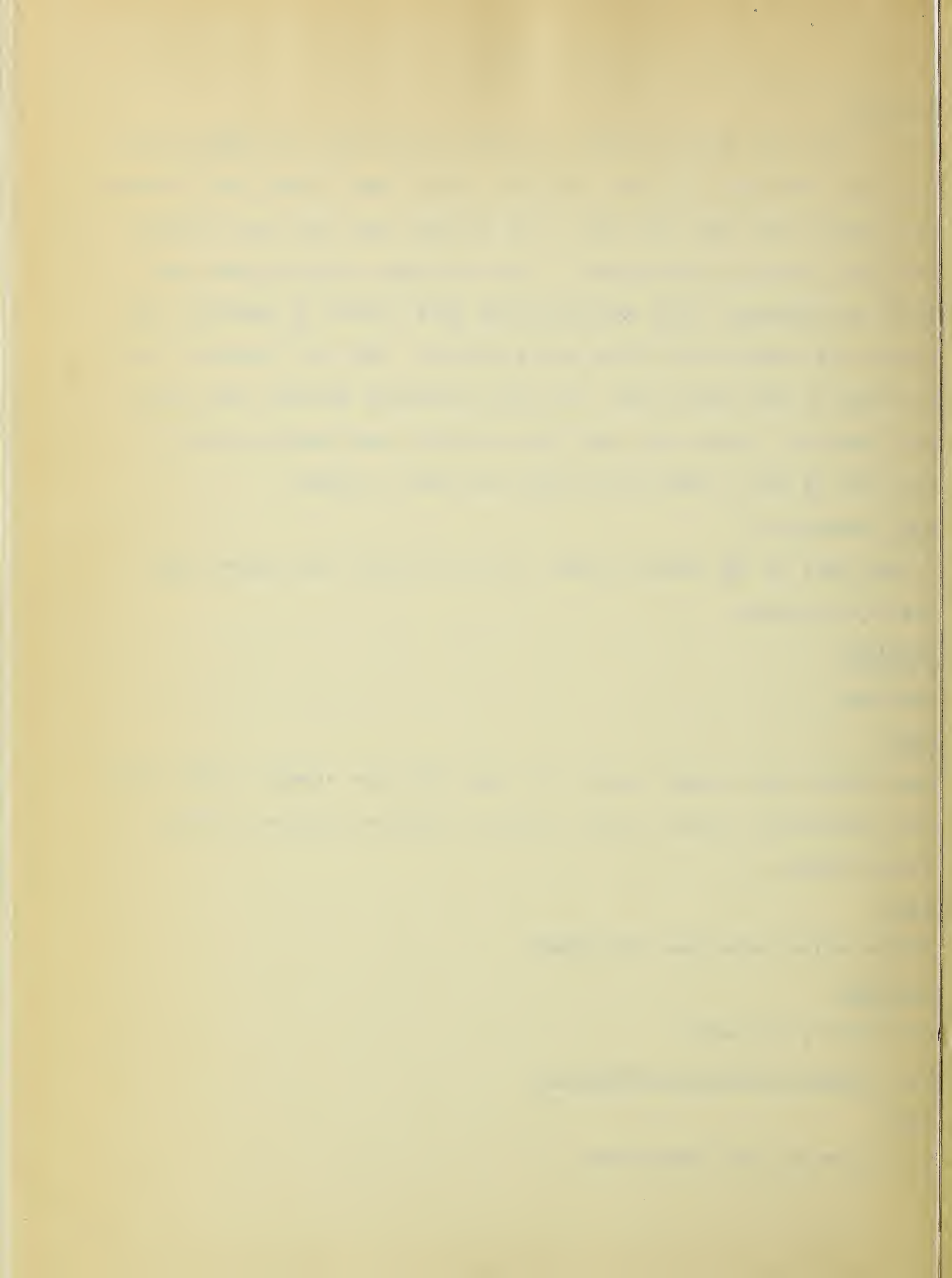
NARRATOR

How about your meat?

SOUND: People walking up steps....

LARK

I'll show you the smokehouse.



SUSY

And don't fergit to show him the turnip mound.

LARK

I plomb forgot that. That reminds me of them good-for-nuthin' Hewitt's....They were so honery...here's the smokehouse.

SOUND: Door creaks open...

NARRATOR

Smells like fresh meat, all right.

LARK

Some of it's fresh, most of it's cured. We keep it salted down year after year in that meat log over there. See it?

NARRATOR

Oh, yes.

LARK

We case our own sausage meat. You see, stranger, we figger if a man treats the land right, he can raise a good crop more than one family can eat in the round of the year, includin' his 'taters, and with those bee stands like we've a-got and a patch of sorghum he can have plenty of sweetnin'.

SOUND: Creaking door closes...

SUSY

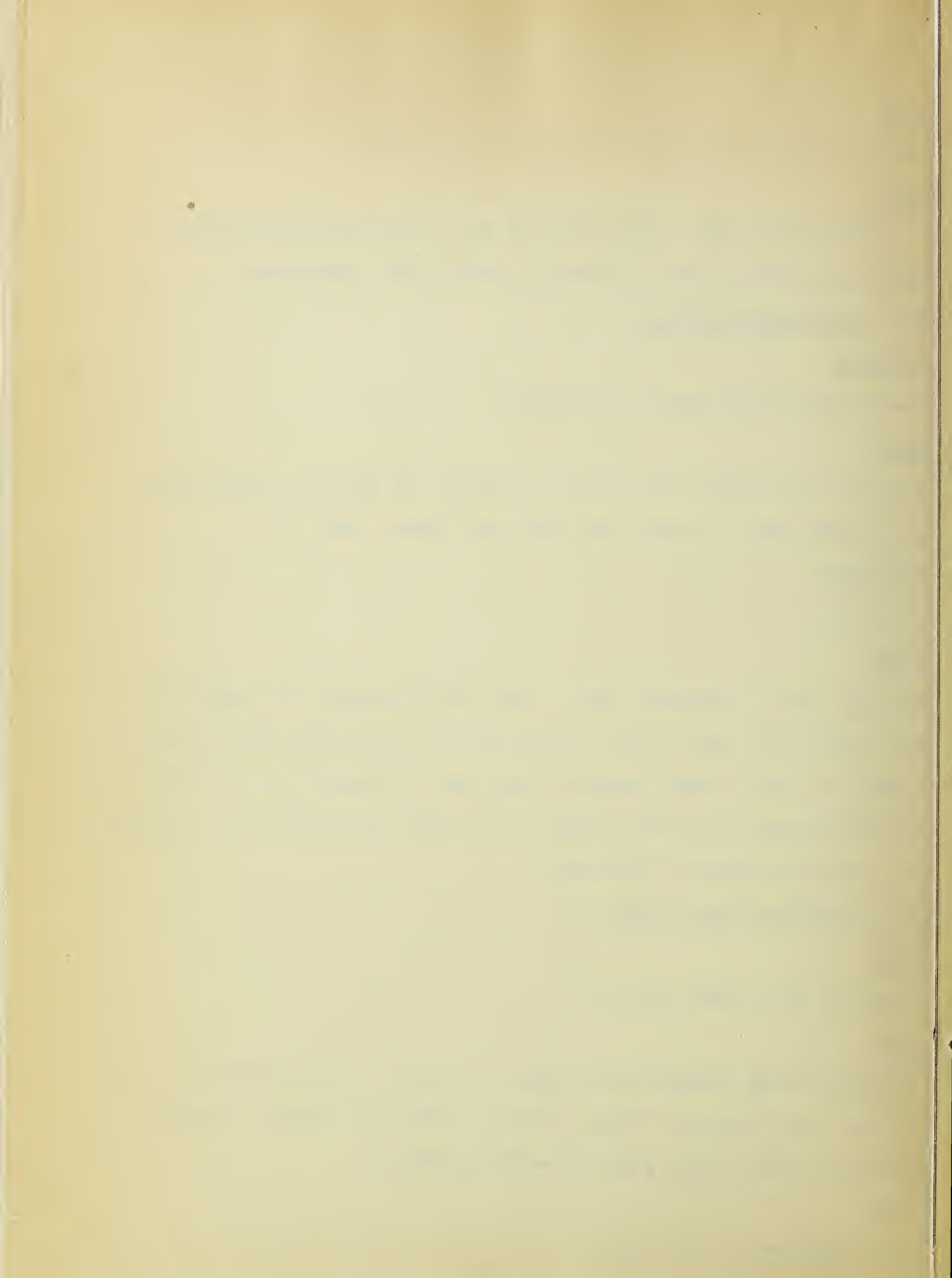
Yonder's the turnip mound.

LARK

I nearly plomb forgot about that. We buried enough turnips to do us till next plantin' time...to say nothin' of feedin' a whole passel of them lazy, good-for-nothin-Hewitts.

SUSY

They squatted on our place.



LARK

Yeah, they said they'd work on shares if we'd let 'em stay. We fixed up the old house, but the whole passel didn't put in one good week's work. Some folks, I reckon, is that way. They's just downright do-less. Never own an acre of land, and if they'd get one they wouldn't try to pectect it. We and my folks have lived here all our endurin' lives in these mountains. We don't aim t'let our land wash away, I kin tell you that. We like our land.

ORGAN: SYMBOLIC MUSIC BEHIND NARRATOR

NARRATOR

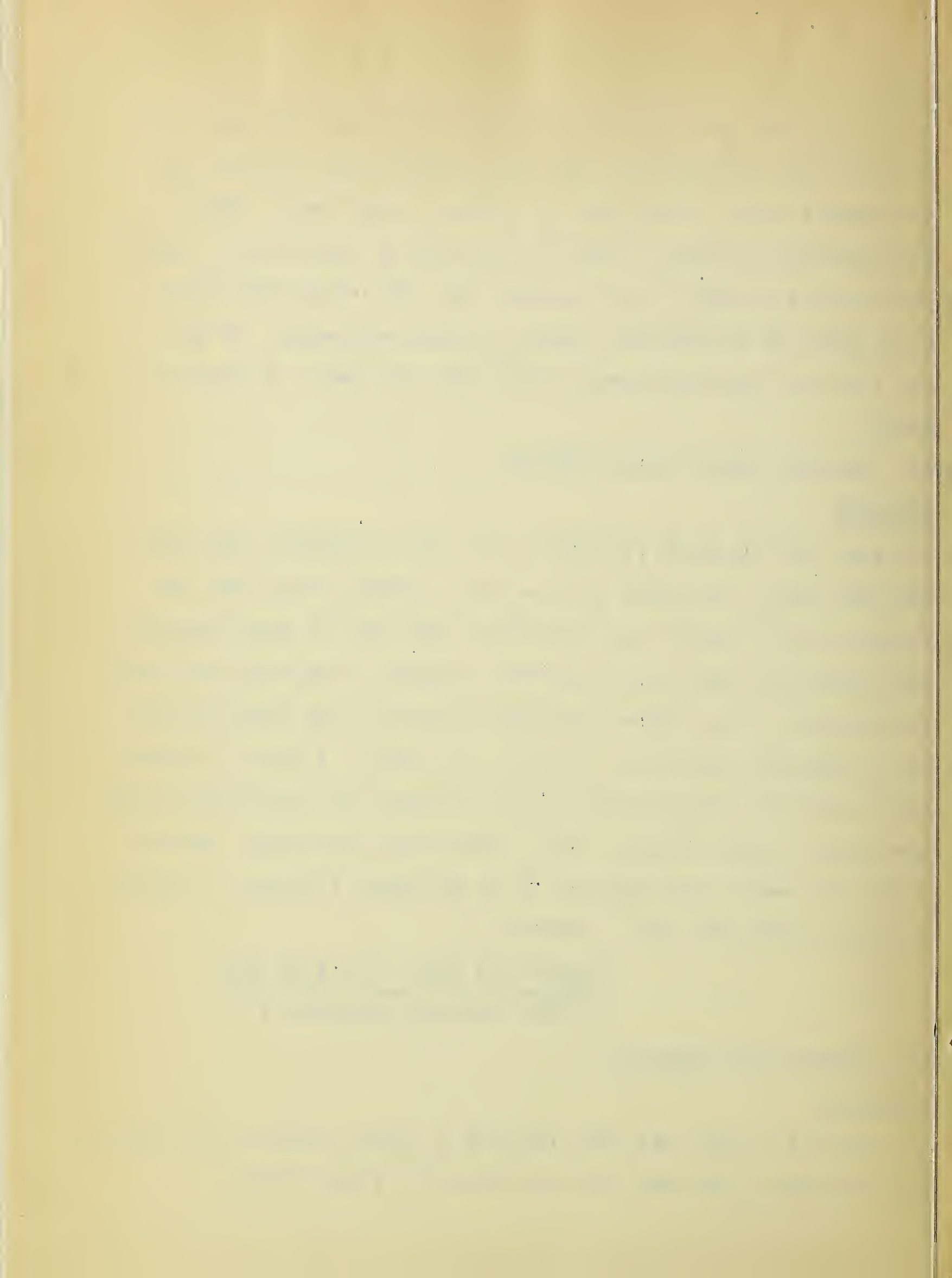
You see, the Big Sandy is made up of a lot of people, just like Lark and Susy. It's made up of a lot of creeks, too, like the Elkhorn and the Beaver and the Shelby that flow in from Kentucky, and Panther and Big Creek from West Virginia. Tug Fork and Louisa Fork come in, too. There's streams to fish in and woods to hunt in -- rabbits, squirrels, 'possums, and quail. A heap of fellows keep hounds for coon hunting. But I started out telling you about the people in Big Sandy...well, there was John Henry. He was about the same as Paul Bunyan, up in Michigan, I reckon. There's one story about him that I remember...

(PRODUCTION NOTE: Use your own judgment about sound and timing in the following sequence.)

SOUND: Hammer hits chisel...

NARRATOR

It seems as though they were building a tunnel between West Virginia and Kentucky...this was the day before the steam drill...



SOUND: Hammer hits chisel...

NARRATOR

And John Henry -- oh, by the way, he was so big he could hold his son in the palm of his hand -- well, John Henry was the champion wielder of the sledge hammer.

SOUND: Hammer hits chisel...

NARRATOR

One man held the chisel, while he did the hammering. Then along came the steam drill. You know how it goes...

SOUND: Steam drill...

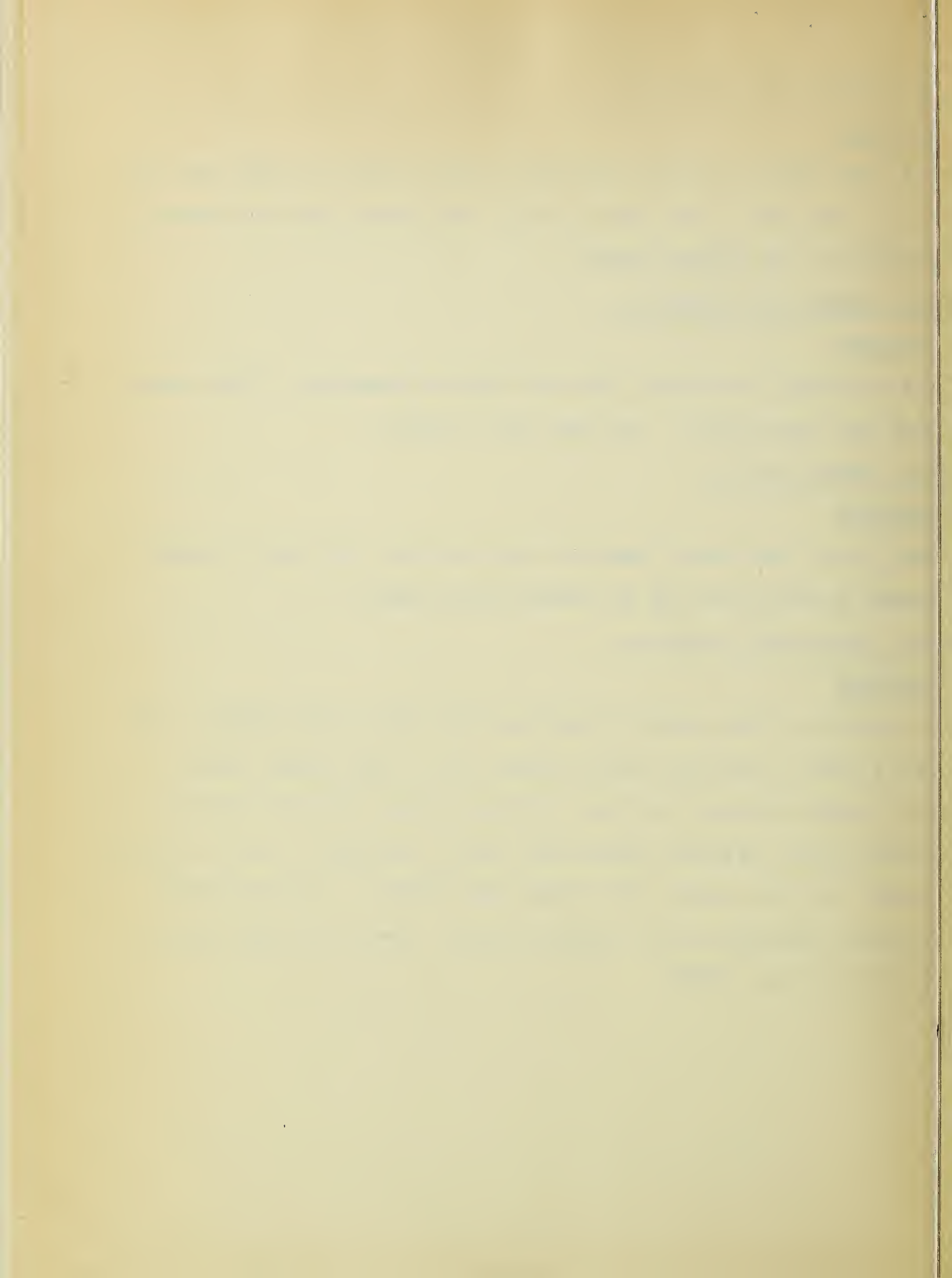
NARRATOR

Well, sir, John Henry vowed he could beat it. He took a sledge hammer in each hand and he pounded like this...

SOUND: Steam drill faster...

NARRATOR

He beat it. Well, that's like the folks born on Big Sandy. And now I want to tell you about another one of the people there. He's Luther Fraley, who owns a 219-acre dairy farm in Lincoln County, West Virginia, along with Robert Williams. No, let Walter Gumbel tell the story. You folks know Walter -- he's the West Virginia extension soil conservationist. Here's the way Walter told it to me...(FADE)



GUMBEL

Here's what Luther Fraley told me : "pasture land that can't be limed, fertilized, and mowed because it's too steep or rough, shouldn't be in pasture. It ought to be retired and planted to permanent woodland." That's what I'm doing, in my new cooperative farm plan with the Soil Conservation Service. I might add that our county agent -- Perry Holden is his name -- has helped us out. Soil erosion has been a problem for some time, and we felt that we ought to change some of the fields a bit.

NARRATOR

And those changes included...

GUMBEL

Mr. Fraley and Mr. Williams have retired something like 50 acres of pasture land to trees, and planted some idle land to trees also. On top of that, they've begun to keep livestock out of 30 acres of woods that used to be pastured. They built new fence to protect those woodlands, and they've built a new stock pond.

NARRATOR

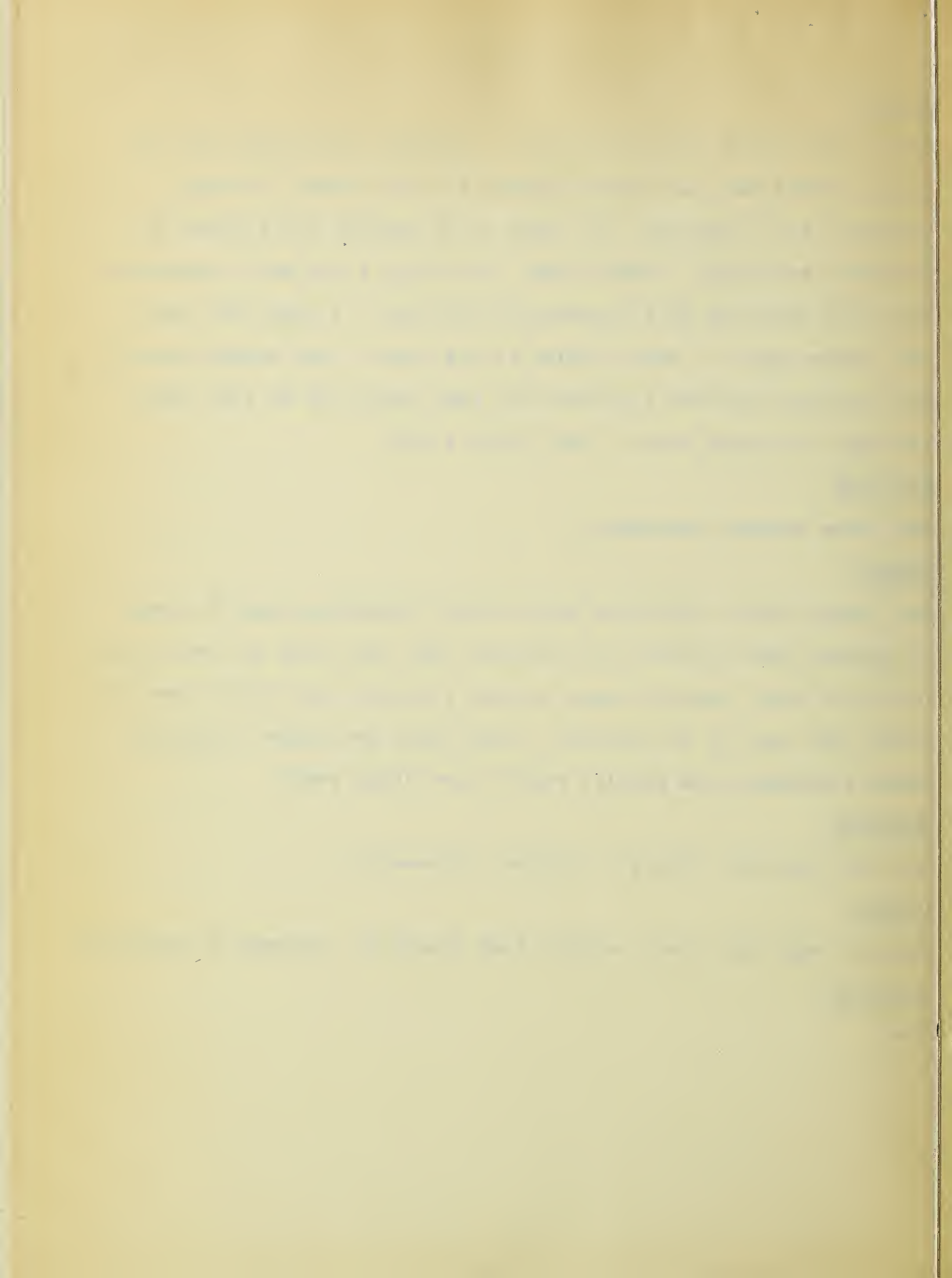
But how about Mr. Fraley's original statement...

GUMBEL

When he said that steep pasture land should be retired to woodland?

NARRATOR

Yes.



GUMBEL

He's agreeing with Gerry Heepink, the Extension Dairyman for the West Virginia University College of Agriculture. Gerry says that land suited to pasture, when properly limed, fertilized, and managed, will provide a better quality and also quantity of grass. Experiments at the Reymann Memorial Farm at Wardensville, West Virginia, show that an unfertilized pasture that produced a little more than 1,300 pounds of milk per acre more than doubled the milk production when it was limed and fertilized. That's mighty important when a dairyman wants to produce milk at a low cost. And don't forget this, stranger, when you build up a good pasture or meadow sod, you build up a defense against soil erosion.

ORGAN: Sneak in SYMBOLIC MUSIC behind...

NARRATOR

We try to farm right in the hills of the Big Sandy Country. I know we've cut off too much timber, because the floods drown out our crops sometimes when the water rushes off the slopes. We're trying to correct that, with soil conservation districts and one thing or another. Meantime, the hillsides and ravines are covered with rhododendron, pink, white, and purple, and we've got honeysuckle and blooming roses along the waysides and the winding trails. The mountainsides are covered with laurel and shell-pink moss in rounded clusters, and giant trees of heaven spread their branches over the earth. It makes you like the earth. It makes you feel like, well, like you're glad to be an American when you can protect that earth. And if you're an American, you will.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

